

PIONEER DAYS CHASE FORMS

Death Cert from Wagon travel to Auto spring

Step Lane residents

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No. 11 Death V. Wagon to Auto Apr 16- '81

4 pix inside

Captions, Death Valley

1. A more recent use of the famed 20 mule team than when "Big Ed" Stiles was freighter in the 1880's.

Frasher Photo

2. Death Valley, Jan. 1920. Sign, Eagle Borax Works, 3 miles, good feed and water. Salt Wells, 7 miles, poor water, no feed. Hanhope Water, 10 miles.

Stephen Willard Photo

3. Jan 20, 1920. 3x5 tires, up the floor of Death Valley.

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4. Lunch time in Death Valley in 1920.

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PIONEER DAYS



by Adele Reed

Death Valley, the Valley of exquisite coloring . . . a modern mecca for many now-a-days . . . was extremely slow in developing roads, due to many hardships.

The discovery of mining and of the Borax in early 1880's brought into prominence the first transport to railhead by big wagons and mule teams. It was in this area that the now world-famous Furnace Creek Ranch began to see more and more use. It was a green oasis of plentiful water and made a fine rest stop for the trail travel and eventually the wagons. As noted in Westways Magazine, 1939, the "Saga of the Twenty Mule Teams" was told by Ed Stiles to writer Phillip Johnston. We use from it with permission.

"Big Ed" Stiles was freighting out of Candelaria, Nv. in 1882, when he received orders to take two wagons and a twelve mule team to Death Valley. He traveled south through the Owens River Valley to Darwin. Thence following the early route to Post Office Springs he entered Death Valley by Wingate Pass. Stiles went to work for the Eagle Borax works for a time, then hired on with the Harmony Borax Works. It was while working for the Harmony Borax Company that he hitched 20 mules in a team and realized he'd made history as it was the first in the desert area.

The route he drove for three years was very difficult. "Big Ed" and his swamper freighted two big wagons of Borax with a water wagon in the rear, that also carried barley for the 20 mules. The jerk line outfit headed south through Death Valley to Saratoga Springs. From there they had to "double" over the Avawatz, winding up a long canyon past Cave Springs to the summit. It took two days to get over those mountains. There was another short "double" over Granite Ridge to Garlic Springs, then easy going to Hawleys, at the Fork of the Road, and to Daggett. It took 11 days to the railhead and 10 days returning, empty.

The men endured extreme heat, sand storms, all kinds of weather with no overhead protection. The biggest chore the teamster had was keeping a watch on 80 hoofs, plus the labor of re-shoeing often. The veterans of the waterless freight routes had to have endurance, skill and strength. "Big Ed" Stiles with his hitching and driving of a first 20 mule team, made history in a desert valley. The heavily built Borax wagons can be seen at the Furnace Creek Ranch and mark a wondrous era of early transportation."

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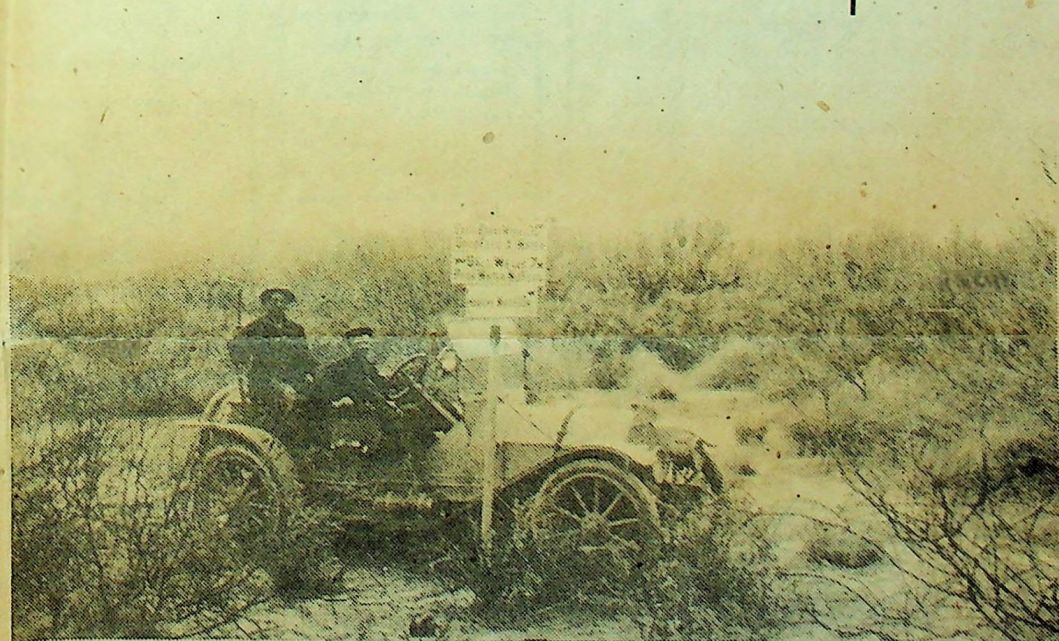
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Along in the 1920's a man with a dream, H. W. "Bob" Eichbaum arrived in the then undeveloped Death Valley. His wife ably supported his plan to build a resort on the western side of the valley. The location he chose was below Emigrant Wash. Soon a small camp having tiny wood and canvas cabins and some army tents became known as "Bungalow City." However, travel was not plentiful from the west due to the fact there was no direct road. The route at that time was long and time consuming. From Darwin it followed the early route to Ballarat, Wildrose and over Emigrant Pass.

In time a section of road in the Darwin Wash was completed and named the "Zinc Hill Road." It connected directly with Wildrose making a much shorter way to the mining camp of Skidoo, and also into Death Valley. It too was not a satisfactory travel-way to bring the needed business from the west, so Eichbaum began to make other plans.

After several attempts, his application for a franchise to build a toll-road over the rocky terrain directly west of his "Bungalow City" was accepted by the Inyo county supervisors. He and party began, by dint of much leg work, to survey the intended roadway following much of the old trail. They worked with the aid of a telescope only.

In 1925 the actual construction was begun and was completed in 1926 to join the short cut Zinc Hill Road at Whippoorwill Springs, thence to Darwin. Toll charges were: Automobiles \$2 each and an additional 50¢ for each passenger. Rates for trucks, trailers and wagons were charged according to the tonnage. Animals were \$1 per head. The original wooden sign is seen in the Eastern California Museum at Independence. The completion of the road called for a celebration, as was the custom after the building of any important object in earlier days. The little resort hosted a great gathering of



Death Valley, Jan. 1920. Sign, Eagle Borax Works, 3 miles, good feed and water. Salt Wells, 7 miles, poor water, no

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In about 1914 the salt that tested as the purest in the world was being brought out by a less expensive and ready transport. A 13 mile aerial cable tramway was constructed from the Salt Works over the Inyo's to a Mill at Swansea near Owens Lake. Mule pack trains were in use in the work of hauling the salt. A load of lumber and about 600 pounds of

Dorothy (Doyle) Cook, who grew up in Bishop, has vivid remembrance: "I will never forget when a girl friend and I rode in the tram buckets over the hills to the Salt Works in Saline Valley. The buckets would sway back and forth, terribly, it was a rough ride, don't know what prompted us to do it. As we came down to the salt fields they shone like diamond-

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Roads remained a problem in the floor of the sandy region for years. According to a clipping from the Inyo Independent news sheet, the first auto into Death Valley was owned and driven by Lew Parker, a miner. In 1904 he left Barstow and followed much of the 20 mule team road that Ed Stiles had traveled. It was tough going for the 1902 Cadillac but he made it. Then in 1941 the auto was brought to the transportation museum at the Ranch. It was a single cylinder, chain drive, open transmission with engine in rear and a horizontal radiator. The Auto Club emblem was in place.

A prominent resident artist of Palm Springs, when there were sandy streets, enjoyed driving his Chalmers Detroit on long desert trips. (In later years Stephen Willard and family resided in summer at Mammoth Lake.) He and friends covered much of the then untraveled lower desert areas and into Death Valley in January, 1920. This was before paved roads. They had to follow faint tracks through sand and mesquite and desert growth. Soon the main road and side roads began to see more travel and were slowly being improved. Caravans of sightseers enjoyed the balmy winter days and the extraordinary scenery in the land of contrast. It has since become the mecca for untold numbers.

The Eichbaum Toll-Road

Today, as we zoom up and over the modern roadway of picturesque Townes Pass on the western edge of Death Valley, it is difficult to realize the

route was but a rough Indian pathway not far in the background.

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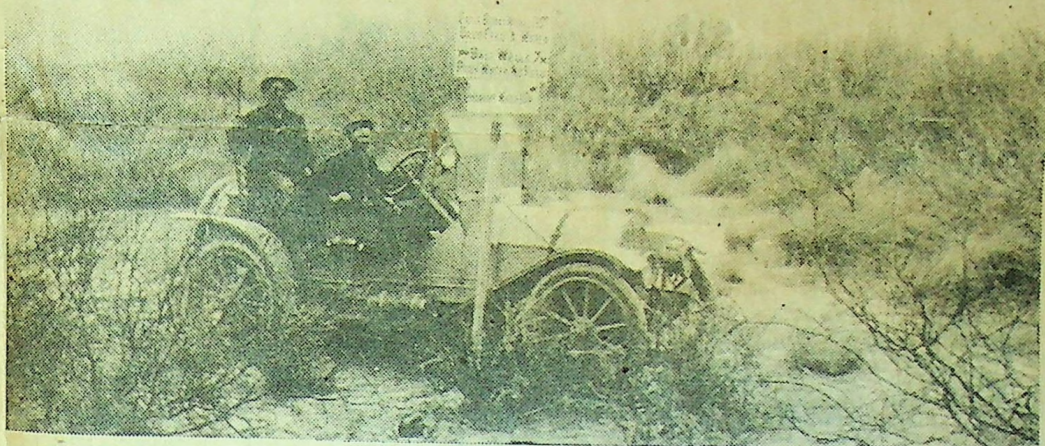
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"Bob" Eichbaum was one of the enthusiastic promoters of good roads throughout all of southern Inyo. He rebuilt his resort and named it Stovepipe Wells Hotel in memory of a nearby prospectors spring once marked by upright lengths of stovepipe.

The death of Eichbaum brought the end of the Toll-way and in 1934 the road became a part of Highway No. 190 named Townes Pass. Three years later the scenic "Darwin Cut-off" was built and bypassed Darwin and Zinc Hill. The little resort of Panamint Springs made a fine way-stop, the only services from Lone Pine to Stovepipe Wells.

(Reference—"The Eichbaum Toll Road" by Mary DeDecker)

The gathering of salt from a valley east of the Inyo mountains became another of southern Inyo's industries. From early times the Saline Valley was known for its salt product. The brilliant white field covered a desert area between mountainous ranges. It was hauled by wagon and team over a 65 mile road to Lone Pine then to Aurora and Bodie and other camps.



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The attached iron buckets had a capacity of 20 tons per hour at ordinary speed. The method of harvest was gathering the thousands of tons of salt into snow-white heaps ready to haul to the Works. As noted in an early picture the heaps looked like tiny pointed tents, jillions of them.

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The salt tram was eventually hauled away by junk dealers. The ore tramway that was used by the Cerro Gordo Mine to a Mill at Keeler was finally dismantled and moved to Columbus, Nv., by a mining company. The line with ore buckets hanging high in air near the Death Valley road was of great interest for long years.

INYO'S POST OFFICES

It is of interest to think of the small mining camps that once were active through out Southern Inyo. We find many had a post office and a postmaster and seemingly the Pm's names were changed very often as well as the PO location. We quote from U.S. P.O. records in the National Archives, Washington D.C.

LEADFIELD—Mrs. Virginia Thomas, 1st PO, June 25, 1926. Located in T 12S, R 45E, M&M, 150 feet north of Titus Canyon Creek, 2½ mi from Nevada State Line and S77 degrees W from Beatty. To serve 400 to 500 people. Located on main street of Leadfield, application made Apr. 24, 1926.

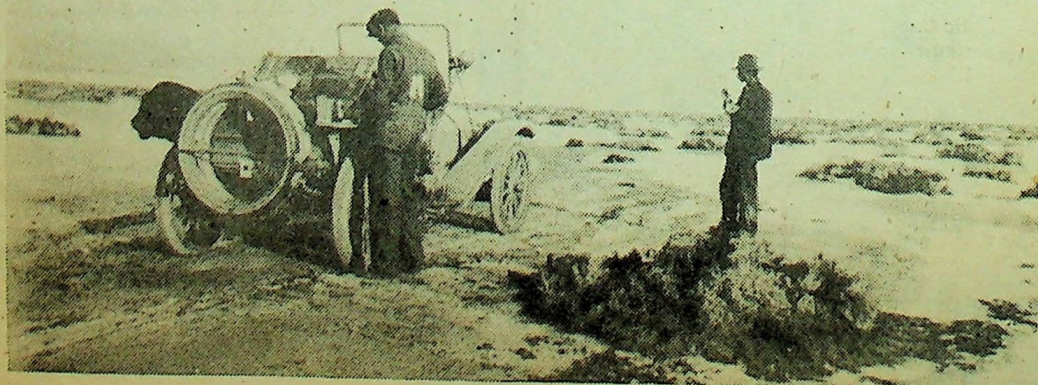
SCHWAB—Eugene P. Houtz, 1st PM, March 18, 1907. Village to be served, Lee, Calif, population 100. Total to be

served 400. Unsurveyed land, Rhyolite 30 miles north, Rose Wells Flag Station 18 miles east, Armagosa River 20 miles east.

DEATH VALLEY—Robert M. Tubb, PM, 14 Mar. '08, no other history.

GREENWATER—Arthur Kunz, 1st PM, Oct 5, 1906. Town of Fairbanks, 35 mi northerly, population 20 to be served. Total to be served 250. Located in T 24N, R 3 E, SBM, sections not surveyed. Map attached by R.E. Tilden, U.S. deputy mineral surveyor, Tonopah, Nv. Shows PO at latitude 36 degrees, 8 minutes, 1½ miles easterly from the Clark Mines.

PANAMINT SPRINGS—July 7, 1939, W. A. Reid made application for PO in SW¼, SEC 30, T 18 S, R 42 E one mile from Darwin Wash and on south side of same, also on south side of highway No. 190.



Lunch time in Death Valley in 1920.

Stephen Willard Photo



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